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**CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY**

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

**OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR**

5 February 1969

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** The Honorable Henry A. Kissinger  
Assistant to the President for  
National Security Affairs

**SUBJECT :** Data on Communist Military and Terrorist  
Activity in Vietnam

In response to your request of 4 February, we have prepared the attached survey of the patterns of Communist military and terrorist activity in South Vietnam since 1 November 1968. Since all of our Vietnam analysts are working flat out on your twenty nine questions, the attached memorandum is a quick cut intended to meet your immediate needs. Once the twenty nine questions are out of the way, we will be able to address the patterns of military and terrorist activity in more detail if you so desire. Furthermore, if this would be helpful, we can work out with you an optimum format for a periodic regular report conveying and analyzing the data available on these topics.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dick".

Richard Helms  
Director

Attachment

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PATTERNS OF COMMUNIST MILITARY ACTIVITY AND TERRORISM  
SINCE NOVEMBER 1968

Summary

After a pronounced lull during the fall of 1968, the scale and scope of Communist-initiated military and terrorist activity began to pick up measurably, though not dramatically, during December 1968 and the curve is still rising. There are few exact parallels between the pattern of Communist activity since 1 November 1968 and Communist activity for the three months prior to last year's Tet offensive (Tet 1968 began on 29 January, Tet 1969 begins on 17 February). Nonetheless, aggregate data on enemy-initiated incidents, as well as information on the movements and behavior of enemy military units, strongly suggest that a major offensive is not far away. It is not certain at this time, however, that this offensive will be timed to coincide with Tet 1969, or that it will be of the scope and character of last year's attacks. It does appear that a significant build-up is under way in the III Corps area and that military units are ending their sojourn in Cambodia and moving into forward assembly areas. The size of the indicated infiltration rate could well support a Tet-like offensive, but the timing of this infiltration leaves uncertain whether the offensive is scheduled for February or March 1969. There has been no significant increase in the level of military activity detected in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), but this lack of activity neither supports nor discredits the threat of an enemy offensive in the near future.

Enemy Activity in I Corps

For the past three months, enemy activity in the I Corps Zone has been characterized by an increasing use of local force and guerrilla units in attacks by fire and harassing type actions while major enemy units have tried to avoid contact and make plans for future offensives. Despite fre-

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enemy plans for combat, the present positions of enemy forces do not seem to suggest imminent large-scale actions. There is only one known

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North Vietnamese Army (NVA) unit of even battalion size in the DMZ and while there are major units just north of the Ben Hai River, several days or perhaps weeks would be required to move them into positions from which they could pose any significant threat to the area. Should the enemy decide to move large forces through the DMZ, it is doubtful that such movement could be accomplished undetected.

In Quang Tri and Thua Thien, the two northernmost provinces of I Corps which the Communists have designated Military Region Tri Thien Hue (MRTTH), there has been a gradual return of several of the enemy regiments which departed for refurbishment in Laotian base areas in the fall of 1968. The North Vietnamese 6th Regiment and elements of the NVA 9th Regiment have returned to western Thua Thien where they appear to be preoccupied with the restoration of logistics facilities to support possible future military campaigns against allied positions and urban centers along the coastal lowlands. The Communists have also expanded their anti-aircraft capabilities in the A Shau Valley area, suggesting a strong enemy determination to protect their base area restoration efforts. There is also limited evidence that the North Vietnamese 90th Regiment has also returned to Thua Thien from sanctuary north of the DMZ. Only the North Vietnamese 4th and 5th Regiments are known to be currently available for renewed operations along the northern coastal plain. Their present deployment, however, does not appear to constitute a major threat to Hue or other large civil or military objectives in the area. Moreover, more than one-half of the more than 55,000 troops detected in the infiltration pipeline appear destined for MRTTH.

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In the Danang - Hoi An area, [ ] refer to enemy plans for attack, but current positions of enemy forces make it appear that a much more serious threat exists against the Thuong Duc Special Forces Camp (SFC), 30 kilometers southwest of Danang. For the immediate future, it seems likely that the threat to Danang itself will continue to consist of rocket attacks and small-scale attacks by fire (ABF). In the Quang Ngai area, enemy attack plans are apparently under way, but as noted in other sectors, the current positions of enemy forces do not seem to make a large-scale attack imminent.

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Although enemy main force units have generally tried to avoid contact and have, for the most part, simply reacted to allied operations, there has been an increased use of local force and guerrilla units in terrorist activities and attacks against population centers as the Viet Cong (VC) apparently try to maintain their presence in the countryside and hinder the accelerated pacification campaign.

A deterrent to future enemy plans for a renewal of any major offensive may be the loss, through allied action, of significant quantities of food and other supplies. During January, forty-four caches were discovered in I Corps containing 361 tons of various types of supplies. It is not known to what extent these losses will impair enemy capabilities for mounting a sustained offensive, but it is quite conceivable that the Communist timetable will be upset.

### Enemy Activity in II Corps

For the past three months, the II Corps area has generally been the quietest in the country. Most major enemy units had withdrawn to Cambodian base areas or to remote bases in South Vietnam. There were light, scattered attacks by fire and harassment of outposts, but no significant engagements. By mid-January, however, enemy units in the B-3 Front area were discussing attack preparations and both the NVA 24th and 66th Regiments had moved from Cambodia to positions in southwest Kontum and northwest Pleiku Provinces from which they posed a threat to the cities of Kontum and Pleiku. The NVA 40th Artillery Regiment had also moved from Cambodia across the border into South Vietnam. On 2 February, however, both the 40th and 66th Regiments were detected in westward moves that placed the 40th once more in Cambodia and the 66th about 20 kilometers west of its 26 January fix and away from any major target in South Vietnam. In view of these rather puzzling moves, enemy intentions in II Corps are somewhat obscure at the moment.

As in I Corps, the enemy lost fairly substantial quantities of supplies during January. A total of 23 caches were discovered consisting of 118 tons of food and other supplies. While this is considerably less than the discoveries in I Corps, there have generally been fewer enemy troops in II Corps and so the losses sustained may be of equal seriousness.

### Enemy Activity in III Corps

In the III Corps area during this period, we have seen the enemy amass the most formidable single force anywhere in South Vietnam. Except for several isolated attacks (costly to the Communists) against relatively isolated allied installations, the enemy has largely avoided contact in III Corps. The indications are that he has been preparing his forces during this time for a period of intensified actions at times and places which have not yet been definitely fixed. Agent reports, interrogation of prisoners and defectors, and captured documents all point toward attacks against installations and urban areas sometime in the next three to six weeks. Prisoners have related that they have undergone special training in street fighting tactics.

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There have been reports of special sapper units -- the so-called CUMS -- which have been given very special training for future actions against targets in Saigon. Members of these CUMS have been picked up by security forces as they have attempted to slip into Saigon in small groups. As a possible prelude to an offensive against Saigon, there has been a steady but undramatic climb in terrorist activity in Saigon -- directed mostly at local self-defense installations and personnel, but on two occasions directed at cabinet-level members of the government. The most significant troop movements have involved the 5th and 9th VC Divisions. In the last four weeks, the 5th VC Division headquarters and at least two regiments associated with it have been detected by communications intelligence moving steadily from the Cambodian/South Vietnam border area to War Zone "D" north and east of Saigon where they are in position to strike out at the Long Binh and Bien Hoa military complexes. Both have been mentioned as possible targets of Communist military action. To the west of Saigon, the VC 9th Division has been detected [redacted] hovering in position in the area of the South Vietnam/Cambodia border region known as the "Angel's Wing." The NVA 1st Division apparently is completing its combat preparations in northern Tay Ninh Province, while the 7th VC Division has taken up positions in western Binh Long Province, approximately where it was located in late 1967, prior to the Tet offensive. Allied forces have also detected large stores of materiel cached by the enemy as part of his preparation of the battlefield. In January alone, over 289 tons of materiel, including 88 tons of ammunition, were uncovered.

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#### Enemy Activity in IV Corps

We have not detected any enemy moves in this area which would point up his intentions there. [redacted]

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There have been numerous shellings and harassment of outposts during the past week, but no large-scale engagements have occurred. The Chieu Hoi (the Government of Vietnam's program to induce enemy desertions) rate remains high -- a total of 2,142 (Hoi Chanhs) ralliers during January. While the Chieu Hoi rate and other sources indicate poor VC morale in the Delta, the enemy still retains the capability of mounting strong attacks when he desires to do so.

#### Enemy Activity in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)

There have been no significant movement of enemy units in the DMZ for more than four months. The only NVA unit definitely identified in contact in the DMZ since October 1968 is the 27th Battalion of Group 31. There

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is, and has been for four months, a fairly heavy concentration of enemy forces in the eastern portion of the Zone just north of the demarcation line, but no southward movement of these units has been noted.

There have been 2,303 incidents or sightings in the DMZ since the 1 November bombing halt, but these have not involved any known major enemy units. The majority of incidents or sightings have involved either small groups of men or enemy activity such as work in progress on emplacements, etc. Only 114 groups of more than 20 men have been detected to date.

Firing incidents by the enemy have been mainly against friendly aerial observers overflying the DMZ area. To date, some 123 such firing incidents have occurred -- 105 against aerial observers and the remainder against bases and installations south of the DMZ.

### Infiltration

Infiltration into South Vietnam during the past three months (November 1968 - January 1969) has shown some interesting characteristics. During November, a total of only 13 groups were noted with an estimated strength of approximately 8,000 men. During December, though, there was a drastic increase in infiltration activity as approximately 32,000 troops began to deploy towards South Vietnam. The number of groups detected (46) was roughly comparable to that of the spring of 1968 (47 in March, 52 in April, and 52 in May). A peculiarity of the December infiltration was that several of the groups appeared to be regimental size units and not the normal groups of replacement personnel with strengths of from 550 - 650 men. No new major NVA units have thus far been identified by either communications intelligence or collateral sources as being in South Vietnam. During January, there was a marked decrease in the level of infiltration as only about 15,000 new troops were detected in the pipeline. Also, the strength of groups had apparently reverted to the generally accepted norm. To date in February, no new groups have been detected.

### Enemy Activity Levels - Parallels to Pre-Tet 1968

The aggregate statistics on attacks and other VC-initiated incidents do not point unequivocally toward a Tet-like offensive. In a broad sense, however, it is true that the Tet offensive of 1968 followed a gradual heightening of military activity subsequent to the August 1967 lull. The current data does suggest a build-up of military activity after a nadir in October. Despite the apparent unexplained month's difference -- the later

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date for Tet in 1969 can account for only half of the two-month's difference -- the slowly accelerating military activity strongly suggests that some sort of offensive is in the making.

Two factors combine to make the parallelism between Tet 1968 and Tet 1969 very tenuous. First, the absolute levels of activity are considerably lower now than they were before Tet 1968. In December 1967, for example, VC attacks totalled 277 while in December 1968 there were only 194 -- with preliminary data for January 1969 indicating not much change. Free World combat deaths in December 1967 were 2,075 while in December 1968 the figure was 1,648. Second, the pattern of aggregate statistics prior to Tet 1968 was not very distinctive and by itself was not a clear indicator of an offensive of that scope. Any parallelism, therefore, would lead to a significant degree of uncertainty even if the patterns were identical.

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